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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000359

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: OIC ENVOY SADA CUMBER'S VISIT TO QATAR

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael A. Ratney,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: President Bush's special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) met April 29 with Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed Al-Mahmoud. Al-Mahmoud welcomed U.S. initiatives with the OIC but cautioned that changing Muslims' views of the U.S. would also require progress on a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Al-Mahmoud also offered to take another look at how quickly Qatar can move forward to recognize Kosovo's independence. While in Doha, Special Envoy Cumber held a press roundtable with journalists, one positive outcome of which was the placement in a local Arabic-language daily the day following his visit of an Embassy-placed op-ed piece on recognizing Kosovo. In addition to addressing high school students at a local Pakistani school, he received briefings on the work of the Qatar Foundation, Georgetown University's Center for International and Regional Studies, and the Fanar Islamic Center. End Summary.

12. (C) Accompanied by Charge and P/E Chief, Special Envoy Sada Cumber briefed Al-Mahmoud on developments since their last meeting in Senegal. He said the OIC leadership supported a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the U.S. and the OIC in science and technology, education, and health. However, the OIC was not keen on enhancing the status of women as part of the MOU, at least not in the early stages of cooperation.

13. (C) Al-Mahmoud said while Qatar and the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council take no issue with including the role of women in the MOU, other OIC members hold different perceptions. It is better, advised Al-Mahmoud, to call for empowering all elements of society, especially youth, to encourage more positive perceptions. He added that taking slower, less aggressive first steps under the MOU is the best way to proceed. Keeping the focus on anything that creates job, especially for young people, is the best route to success. Emphasis on education and health, he added, contributes to creating employment opportunities.

14. (C) Noting that the GDP in many OIC member states is low, Special Envoy Cumber described an initiative to establish digital libraries in these countries at a substantial savings over the USD 3 to 5 million it would cost to construct a physical library. Special Envoy Cumber hoped that OIC states would accept to participate in this program, which would make available one million books without the payment of licensing fees so long as the countries could provide tables, chairs, computers, and a broadband Internet connection.

15. (C) Al-Mahmoud responded that Muslims welcome American initiatives such as those Special Envoy Cumber described. The larger problem is political positions and perceptions. It is in everyone's interest for the Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side in peace and bring about a Palestinian state. The members of the OIC, said Al-Mahmoud,

would recognize Israel when a peace agreement is finalized. In the meantime, so long as Muslims continue to see "the killing of innocents in Palestine" on television, it would be hard for the Islamic world to get beyond policy differences with the U.S. The Muslim World, said Al-Mahmoud, expects fairness from the U.S. Special Envoy Cumber replied that other prominent Muslims had made this same point and urged the U.S. in his meetings to show global leadership based on its values and ethics. Special Envoy Cumber pledged to take these perspectives back to President Bush.

¶6. (C) Turning to Kosovo, Special Envoy Cumber encouraged Qatar to announce its diplomatic recognition very soon, since early recognition was essential to build the economy and infrastructure and otherwise ensure that Kosovo does not become a failed state. Al-Mahmoud responded that "Qatar appreciates the noble position" the U.S. has taken on Kosovo from the beginning, when Muslims in the 1990s were dying there. The U.S., he pointed out, protected Kosovo from a massacre. This is the U.S. that Muslims love and respect. With respect to Qatar's recognition of Kosovo, Al-Mahmoud said he would take another look at how quickly Qatar can move forward in offering recognition.

OTHER DOHA ACTIVITIES

¶7. (U) Following the meeting with Al-Mahmoud at MFA, Special Envoy Cumber met with Mehran Kamrava, the Director for the Center for International and Regional Studies at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. Kamrava briefed Special Envoy Cumber on the conferences and outreach of Georgetown to Islamic figures. Special Envoy

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Cumber also received a briefing on the Qatar Foundation, the initiative of the Amir's wife, Sheikha Mozah, to encourage education and social development in Qatar. (Georgetown and the other U.S. universities located on Education City outside of Doha are sponsored by the Qatar Foundation.) In the evening, Special Envoy Cumber received a tour from Imam Abdesalam Al-Basyouni of a new exhibit at the Fanar Islamic Center. The exhibit presents Islam as a religion, culture, and way of life to non-Muslims. Earlier in the day, Special Envoy Cumber addressed a group of high school students at a local Pakistani school, where he used his personal journey from childhood in Karachi to his current duties as the President's OIC envoy as an example of the positive role the United States plays in the world.

¶8. (C) Comment: Al-Mahmoud offered nothing new on Kosovo, and we continue to believe that Qatar will join GCC consensus on announcing diplomatic recognition. For some weeks, Post has attempted to place an op-ed piece in the local press urging diplomatic recognition of Kosovo. One positive outcome of Special Envoy Cumber's trip, especially his roundtable with local journalists, was the successful placement of an op-ed piece in the April 30 edition of the Arabic-language "Al Arab."

¶9. (U) Special Envoy Cumber has cleared this message.
RATNEY